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Chair

Mr. Tom Lukiwski

Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates

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● (1100)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Moose Jaw—[illegible] Centre—Lanigan, CPC)): Colleagues, welcome. It's good to see you all came. We're one day closer to getting out of here, so I'm a happy guy.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Chair: We are in public, colleagues, and we are resuming the debate on Mr. Blaikie's motion. I will read the motion once again:

> That the Committee invite each Minister responsible for the departments and agencies listed in the table on pages A1-2 through A1-8 of the Main Estimates 2018-19 titled "Budget 2018: Details of Spending Measures and Proposed Departmental Allocations" to provide a briefing as well as answer questions regarding the associated initiatives, and that the meetings be held no later than Wednesday, June 6, 2018.

That, of course, is tomorrow.

Mr. Blaikie, you still have the floor. I still have a speakers list, which we have been working from for the last couple of meetings. Please proceed.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie (Elmwood—Transcona, NDP): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Just to summarize very briefly my remarks from the last day, the purpose of this motion is to be able to get the various ministers who are going to be responsible for spending the money under vote 40 to come here to discuss their plans. We've heard from a number of departments that they don't have very clear plans about what to do with the money, so it would be interesting to hear from those other departments. Of course, that's the purpose of this motion.

I do hope we're going to find time to resume consideration of the estimates either with or without the ministers. Of course, you'll know, Mr. Chair, that we now have over 200 potential amendments to vote 40 before us. Notice was served yesterday with respect to those amendments. I think it's important to try to make time to consider those.

Members of the committee will know—as I know you do—that June 10 is the deadline for estimates to be considered by committees. After that, they are deemed reported back to the House, whether or not they are in fact reported back by committees. Therefore, I would prefer to engage in that study with the ministers.

Even if we don't get the ministers, though, I think it's incumbent upon the committee to return to the study of the estimates as soon as possible so that we can at least deal with some of the 200 motions that have now been proposed to amend Treasury Board vote 40.

I understand that, if I cede the floor, we're going to have a vote on this motion, so I won't take any more of the committee's time with my remarks.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Next on the speakers list I have Mr. McCauley.

Mr. Kelly McCauley (Edmonton West, CPC): I would like to read into the record these 300 pages. No, I'm just kidding.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Kelly McCauley: I agree with Mr. Blaikie's motion. We have also been very critical of vote 40, about the lack of transparency. I've sat in on other committees, and we've seen very clearly in this committee and other committees that ministers are not aware of what their money is for.

With one of them, their senior ADM said—and it was actually in this committee—that it was preposterous to expect them to explain details before the money was approved, which is the exact opposite of our general procedures.

Going back to King Edward 700 years ago, he wrote, "what touches all should be approved by all", and we are not getting an opportunity to approve it all, so I do back Mr. Blaikie's motion. I thank him for all the hard work on the file.

I'll finish up by just saying that, if we can get to a vote, we can get on to our committee business.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. McCauley.

Next I have Madam Ratansi.

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi (Don Valley East, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I should thank Mr. Blaikie. You're ability to speak non-stop for one hour is really admirable. That is a skill few people possess, not me.

There were too many conflicting ideas that appeared in that one hour. Perhaps we can keep the record straight. In 2017, the House of Commons approved a provisional change to the Standing Orders. There was a pilot project to match the estimates process with the budget process, because in the previous years we as parliamentarians had been approving estimates that made no sense. I think in that process as you transition from one system to another there has to be some contingency.

As you know, and as I know as an accountant, we keep contingencies because there has to be buffer. In that buffer, vote 40 appeared. It's only dealing with 10% of the total budget. I think what is important is that the reconciliation between the budget and the estimates allows the flexibility for this voting.

It has brought about more transparency. We know what we are voting on. There's monthly online reporting. For the first time there's a monthly online reporting that talks about how these funds are being spent. There is the estimates process that we know has balanced itself out.

I think what we also need to understand is that the budget implementation vote, the $7 billion, will be used exclusively for measures approved in the 2018 federal budget. If they are not used, they will collapse. The AG has made that very clear. The PBO probably has a different understanding but I think I would go with the AG over the PBO.

Your motion says that the ministers should be called, but the ministers can appear before any committee. We've already had Minister Brison and Minister Qualtrough for the mains. The following ministers have appeared or are scheduled to appear at other committees: the Speaker at procedure and House affairs; Minister Bains and Minister Duncan at industry; Minister Morneau and Minister Lebouthillier at finance; Minister Goodale at security; Minister Duclos, Minister Duncan, and Minister Hajdu at human resources; Minister Monsef at the status of women; Minister MacAulay at agriculture; and Minister Freeland.

They're always available. I think, therefore, I call this motion, in my opinion and in our opinion, unnecessary. We call the vote.

● (1105)

The Chair: If you could put that in the form of a proper motion, that would trigger a vote.

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi: Okay.

Mr. Chair, I propose that the debate be now adjourned and call for a vote.

The Chair: The motion is that the debate be now adjourned. That will trigger an immediate vote.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Mr. Chair, my understanding was that we were going to vote on the substantive motion and not vote on adjournment for the debate.

The Chair: Correct.

Ms. Yasmin Ratansi: Mr. Blaikie, you are right.

We are withdrawing the motion to adjourn the debate.

The motion will be that we call the vote on the motion.

The Chair: I want to make sure that we're doing this procedurally correctly.

That does not force a vote. However, we have two others on the speakers list, Mr. Peterson and Mr. McCauley. If they cede their time or if they have nothing to say, then we will go directly to a vote.

Mr. Peterson, you're up next.

Mr. Kyle Peterson (Newmarket—Aurora, Lib.): I have much to say but will cede my time.

An hon. member: I would ask that we have a recorded vote.

The Chair: A recorded vote it shall be.

(Motion negatived: nays 6; yeas 3)

The Chair: Mr. Blaikie, please, go ahead.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: I would move now that the committee resume consideration of the votes referred to it in the main estimates 2018-19.

The Chair: That does trigger a vote with no debate. Would you like it recorded?

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Yes, I would.

(Motion negatived: nays 6; yeas 3)

● (1110)

The Chair: Colleagues, before I suspend to go in camera, I have something to say.

Ms. Ratansi, you said that Mr. Blaikie's ability to speak for an hour without interruption was a gift few have. I would remind you that I have done a bit of filibustering myself, at least from time to time, and my personal record is eight and a half hours without stopping. I have to say, by congratulating Mr. Blaikie and forgetting what I have done in past years, you've hurt my only feeling.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Chair: We will now suspend for a couple of moments while we go in camera.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

● (1110)

_____ (Pause) _____

● (1220)

[*Public proceedings resume*]

The Chair: Colleagues, we'll reconvene. We are now in public.

Go ahead, Mr. Blaikie.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

If we do have time left on the clock, before the end of our meeting, I just would move again—as I do think it's important that we address the estimates—that we now move to resume consideration of the votes under the main estimates 2018-19.

The Chair: That motion does trigger an immediate vote. It's non-debatable. The motion is on the floor.

Mr. Daniel Blaikie: Could I get a recorded vote?

(Motion negatived: nays 6; yeas 3)

The Chair: Is there any further business before the committee?

Yes, Mr. McCauley.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: I'd like to put a motion forward:

> That the Committee extend its sitting on Thursday, June 7, 2018, to hold a panel meeting with Treasury Board Secretariat officials and officials from each of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, Department of Finance, Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, Department of Indigenous Services Canada, Department of Industry, Department of Natural Resources, Department of the Environment, Department of Transport, National Research Council of Canada, and Office of the Commissioner for Federal Judicial Affairs to discuss their allotments in the Main Estimates 2018-19 as per the online list provided by the Treasury Board Secretariat.

The Chair: One moment, please, Mr. McCauley.

Kelly, we've received notice of motion. It will not be discussed today, but now that we've received the notice of the motion, at the next meeting, you'd certainly be able to bring it forward for discussion.

Go ahead, Mr. Peterson.

Mr. Kyle Peterson: I move that the meeting be adjourned.

The Chair: There's now a motion to adjourn, but I'm looking for any further business.

● (1225)

Mr. Kyle Peterson: There are no other agenda items.

An hon. member: [*Inaudible—Editor*] just in case we have any other motions to move right now?

Mr. Kyle Peterson: We could all play the same game.

Mr. Kelly McCauley: Democracy is not a game, Mr. Peterson.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Chair: On that profound thought, this meeting is adjourned.

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